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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

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C O N T E N T S

Ethiopia: African Relations	1
Bangladesh: Internal Security Concerns.	6

Sept 9, 1975

Ethiopia

African Relations

The ruling military council's relations with black Africa have been on the upswing since they hit a low point last November following the execution of 59 political prisoners. Ethiopia's primary current objective is to win acceptance of its Eritrean policy. Foreign Minister Kifle Wodajo has traveled widely on the continent to explain the council's position that the Eritrean conflict is an internal matter. He has had a measure of success--almost all black African countries have either announced their support for Ethiopia's territorial integrity or adopted a neutral position on the Eritrean question. Many African governments have reservations about the council's pursuit of a military victory, but they have not made a public issue of it.

The deposition of Haile Selassie has not had a noticeable impact on Ethiopia's status in pan-African politics. The absence of his personal prestige--an important factor contributing to Ethiopian influence on the continent--apparently has been balanced by the new regime's adoption of domestic policies that place Ethiopia more firmly in the African mainstream.

Government leaders and the controlled press engage in more stridently anticolonial rhetoric than did their counterparts under the old regime. The military council, however, has not taken an active role in developing African policy toward the white-ruled portions of southern Africa. Ethiopia supports the efforts of such African countries as Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia, which are seeking to advance majority rule in Rhodesia and the independence of Namibia by diplomatic rather than military means.

(Continued)

Sept 9, 1975

1

SECRET

Addis Ababa continues to view Somalia as a potential military threat, because of Mogadiscio's claims to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, inhabited mainly by ethnic Somalis. Ethiopian leaders have expressed fears that a Somali move could take place soon now that Somali President Siad has relinquished the chairmanship of the OAU. Recent evidence suggests that Somalia may, in fact, be preparing to resume its support for guerrilla operations in the Ogaden. A Somali-supported insurgency would revive Ethiopian fears that Mogadiscio ultimately intends to seize the region and incorporate it into Somalia. If guerrilla incursions begin, Addis Ababa will probably begin clamoring for additional US military aid, although we would not expect the hard-pressed Ethiopian armed forces to strike in retaliation directly into Somalia.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia has put Somalia on the defensive on the issue of the French Territory of the Afars and Issas (FTAI). Both Somalia and Ethiopia have traditionally claimed the territory--formerly called French Somaliland--because ethnics from both countries make up the bulk of its population. Each side is irreconcilably opposed to the other gaining control of the territory, if France decides to leave. The military council earlier this year renounced Ethiopia's claim, however, and enunciated a policy favoring self-determination and independence. Mogadiscio also publicly supports independence for the FTAI, but clearly views independence as a prelude to incorporating the territory into Somalia.

At the OAU summit conference in July, Somalia introduced a resolution calling for the territory's independence. Ethiopia proposed an amendment calling on all neighboring states to renounce all claims to the FTAI. In a clear reference to the Somali constitution, which alludes to Mogadiscio's claim to the FTAI, the amendment also called on neighboring states to remove all "legal" claims to the territory from their laws and

(Continued)

Sept 9, 1975

2

SECRET

SECRET

constitutions. Ethiopia's initiative apparently helped persuade the summit to postpone a decision on the Somali proposal to locate a sub-regional office of the OAU liberation committee in Mogadiscio to oversee the "liberation" of the territory.

Ethiopia's renunciation of its claim is mainly a tactical maneuver designed to improve its position relative to Somalia. Addis Ababa still has a vital interest in the future of the FTAI, and will insist on playing an important role in any moves to alter its status. Ethiopia has good relations with France, and would be satisfied with a continued French presence. Addis Ababa realizes, however, that Paris may not be able to withstand the growing pressure for decolonization coming from within the territory, from Arab and African countries, and from French leftists. The ruling council has therefore decided to identify with the independence sentiment, as perhaps the best means of protecting its interests in the territory.

The council probably also views the renunciation of Ethiopia's claim as a means of lessening the possibility of a military confrontation with Somalia over the territory. Ethiopia's army is already spread thin fighting the Eritrean insurgency and lesser uprisings throughout the country, and maintaining a sizable force in the Ogaden. Ethiopia would accept a genuinely independent government that guaranteed Ethiopia the right to continue to use the port of Djibouti, but it would fight rather than allow a Somali takeover.

The council does not want its support for independence of the FTAI to sour its relations with France. Ethiopia is fighting a guerrilla conflict with its own Afar tribesmen along the border of the territory, and is depending on France to deny the Afar sanctuary inside the FTAI.

(Continued)

Sept 9, 1975

3

SECRET

SECRET

Ethiopia's relations with Sudan are strained. The military council believes President Numayri is aiding the Eritrean rebels, and has criticized him for giving too much publicity to his mediation efforts. Numayri, for his part, is unhappy with Ethiopia's refusal to accept his proposal for an immediate cease-fire and direct talks with the rebels.

Relations between Addis Ababa and Khartoum took a sharp turn for the worse in late June and early July when the Ethiopian press published exaggerated stories about renewed civil war in southern Sudan. The Ethiopians claimed 12,000 refugees had crossed the border to escape the fighting. Addis Ababa probably wanted to raise the implicit threat of Ethiopian intervention in southern Sudan to get Khartoum to reexamine its alleged support for the Eritreans. Numaryi may yet be able to act as mediator in the Eritrean dispute, but no progress is likely for at least several months.

Ethiopia's relations with Kenya cooled considerably in the immediate aftermath of the military's deposition of Haile Selassie a year ago, but have since been restored to their former cordial basis. President Kenyatta was a close personal friend of Haile Selassie and resented the way he was shunted aside. Kenyan officials at the time were also concerned about the military council's apparent lack of direction and its tendency toward radicalism.

The improvement in relations came about mainly because the Kenyans decided that their shared security interests--Somalia also claims large parts of Kenya inhabited by ethnic Somalis--outweighed other considerations. Kenya has begun to place new emphasis on its military preparedness because of Soviet arms deliveries to Somalia.

(Continued)

Sept 9, 1975

4

SECRET

Early this year, Nairobi took steps to restore cooperation with Addis Ababa within the framework of a mutual defense pact signed in 1963 that is primarily designed to protect both countries from Somali military attacks or insurgencies instigated by Somali-backed guerrillas. A meeting of the Ethiopian-Kenyan consultative commission last April went very well; the two sides pledged to increase military cooperation.

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The Kenyans apparently have also adopted a more benign view of the council's internal policies. The death of Haile Selassie has removed a potentially troublesome issue over his continued detention. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/BACKGROUND USE ONLY)

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Sept 9, 1975

5

SECRET

Bangladesh

Internal Security Concerns

The new regime has begun showing signs of nervousness over internal security.

Last weekend the government rounded up a former special assistant to the late president Mujib, two prominent figures in Mujib's now banned political party, and a superintendent of police. The arrests were given minimal publicity and, in contrast to recent arrests under the regime's martial law regulations, no charges were made public. Apparently some in the new government saw the three civilians as a possible source of leadership to unreconstructed followers of Mujib.

In another weekend move, the Dacca regime offered a general amnesty to those who surrender illegally held arms by September 13. The effort to round up the arms came as no surprise. Shortly after coming to power, the government said the widespread possession of illicit weapons was one of its principal concerns. Many former members of Mujib's party still possess weapons given them by the old regime.

The government's internal security concerns may have been fueled by the rumored existence of an underground movement of Mujib's supporters seeking revenge. There are also reports of the recent arrest at Radio Bangladesh of individuals caught copying tapes of Mujib's speeches, presumably to be used for clandestine broadcasts.

We have no hard evidence that any of Mujib's followers are coalescing into clandestine groups, but the existence of plotting against the new regime cannot be discounted. Mujib still had many supporters at the time he was overthrown even though he had lost much of his luster in the last year or so. Some of his followers may be eager to revenge the coup and to regain their position of power and influence.

(Continued)

Sept 9, 1975

6

SECRET

SECRET

Finally, the new government continues to have serious internal problems, including divisions between contending factions in the officer corps and the unresolved role the aggressive young coup leaders are to play in the government. It would be difficult for any regime to consolidate its control over politically and economically troubled Bangladesh, especially an internally divided government with little of the massive popular appeal Mujib enjoyed in his early days. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Sept 9, 1975

7

SECRET

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